

John 13 begins making the point that “during supper, Jesus got up from the table” – **not after** supper but during. Picture the disciples with chunks of bread in hand, sipping wine, gnawing a chicken leg or freshly caught fish. They’re eating. It’s supper time.

No one told them this supper would go down as The Last Supper. No one clued them into what would happen next. But it happened. “During supper, Jesus took off his outer robe, tied a towel around himself, poured water into a basin and began to wash feet, wiping them with a towel.”

Lots of action, but not a word. Movement. No dialogue. Jesus began washing and wiping feet, one after another. Two feet, four feet, who knows how many. But no words. Maybe no eye contact, just hands on feet, over and over. Only silence between washer and washed. Not a word.

What were the disciples thinking? No one protests. No one leaves the room. No one says thanks. Perhaps most telling, no one offers to assist Jesus.

No mention of carrying the bowl, or drawing more water: the water might well have been dirty after the first few feet. No offer of a fresh towel: try drying feet with a sopped towel. No mention of any taking off their outer robe to join Jesus on the floor. Where were their manners?

Were the disciples’ mouths and hands too full of food? Were their hearts and minds too frozen by the surprise of it all? No one expected supper to be interrupted like that.

It makes sense the disciples could have been frozen in body, mind, and spirit – in a state of shock, given the intense time it’d been. They’d just come from a walk into Jerusalem where crowds shouted Hosanna. More than a few had hoped Jesus was the liberator they waited for; they needed so badly.

Things weren’t good. Politics were a mess. People were getting mean. Life was hard. Someone mighty was to come make better what was turning bitter.

But Jesus withdrew from such attention. He returned to Bethany to be with friends and followers. But none of them were talking about any of this. All was quiet in the Upper Room.

Then the story tells us, during that supper meal where Jesus has gotten up with towel and basin in hand, he's finally come to Simon Peter. Words are finally said, not first from Jesus, but from Peter who gasps, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

Jesus responds not with silence or a simple Yes, but with an explanation that perhaps goes to the heart of things. Jesus says, "You do not **know** now what I am doing."

That's an understatement. Have you ever thought **what** an understatement it is? Jesus is right, no one at the interrupted supper has a clue what Jesus is doing.

Over the years, I think I've pretty much passed over Jesus' explanation to focus instead on Peter's familiar rejection, "You shall never wash my feet." But in rushing by what Jesus says I wonder if we don't also rush by the gospel.

At the start of John 13, we're told details about Jesus and his **knowing**. "Jesus, **knowing** God had put all things into his hands, that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table."

What if we hold these together. Jesus **knowing**. Peter doesn't **know**. Jesus **knows** God has put all things in his hands. He **knows** where he's come from and to whom he's going. Peter **doesn't know** – has no clue about anything. And here's the good news.

Jesus assures Peter, he will **know**. Jesus said, "You do not **know** now what I am doing, but later you **will** understand." Yet Peter still protests. "You will never wash my feet." So Jesus takes a second stab. "Peter, unless I wash you, *you have no share with me.*" What Jesus **knows** and Peter doesn't **know** has something to do with this "*having a share*" with Jesus.

We're told Jesus **knew** he'd come from God and would return to God. Jesus **knew** God had put all things into his hands; that he'd been empowered by God who loves him. Jesus **knew** God was involved in his life; in his ability to impact the world.

From beginning to end Jesus **knew** the larger story, **knew** his core identity and vocation, **knew Who'd** help him fulfill his vocation. God had given Jesus all he'd need to accomplish being his true self.

Friends, baptism into Christ, hands us the same: God's involvement in our lives, God's empowerment for us to be who God gifts us to be, and out of that being, gifts us to do in the world.

Tonight's washing story lets the disciples, and us, again in on this grace of God's promised presence and empowerment. The news to hold on to these days as we face our challenging world is this: we have all we need to **be** who we're sent to **be**. Into our humble hands has been given grace sufficient.

By the washing of baptism and the fellowship of the Last Supper (we might better call the Lasting Supper), we have a full share with Jesus. Jesus told Simon Peter he would understand, and we too, that God is as involved in our earthly lives, as God was involved in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

Scripture says, "*my grace is sufficient for you.*" It says "*we can do far more abundantly than all we ask or imagine*" – **because** God is involved. We have a "share" in Jesus who came not to be served but to serve.

Jesus' purpose was to love as he was loved. We too don't create love, but are blessed to have a share with Jesus and his love. His purpose is now our own. Thanks be to God.

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